

Kansas Citizens For Science

"Bringing the Enlightenment back to Kansas"

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www.kefs.org

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Dear Board President,

The Kansas science standards adopted in August received a grade of "F" from the conservative Fordham Foundation. The Fordham Report explained that the science writing committee's Fifth Working Draft, rejected by the state Board of Education, "would have attained one of the highest ratings among the state standards reviewed." However, the Fordham Report continues, the Board majority "gutted the document, removing almost every reference to the theoretical backbones of the sciences having historical content - astronomy, geology, and biology - and replacing some of the material with nonsense of a pseudoscientific bent."

Recently, the same SBOE members voted to include a cover letter for the standards in which they claim their efforts "strengthened" the standards, "providing greater clarity and specificity."

In fact, however, the Board majority's actions substantially weakened the Fifth Working Draft, reduced the clarity of the document (in both content and language), and added specificity that supports young-earth creationism instead of valid science.

Virtually all the material added by the Board majority was taken verbatim from a secret draft of the standards written by a group led by Tom Willis of the Creation Science Association of Mid-America (CSAMA), located in Missouri. The Willis document reflects CSAMA's belief in a literal six-day creation of the world within the last 10,000 years. Despite convincing evidence to the contrary, the Board majority has steadfastly denied CSAMA's involvement. See www.sunflower.com/~jkrebs for details.

The Board cover letter also states that although the Board majority deleted core material in biology, geology, and astronomy, districts are free to teach those topics anyway. This "local control" argument is deceptive and misleading.

State standards are intended to ensure uniform educational opportunity for students. The material deleted from the Fifth Working Draft is essential scientific knowledge, and is necessary for students preparing for national exams, post-secondary education, and participation in the worldwide scientific community. To allow districts to omit this material at their discretion is irresponsible.

Districts must do well on state assessments to meet accreditation expectations, so teachers are increasingly under pressure to omit content that is not in the standards. Schools use the standards as their guide for writing course outcomes. Deletion of standards on evolution, geology, and astronomy will then be reflected in the absence of those topics in individual courses. In addition, many science teachers, without the support of state standards, will be reluctant to risk the controversy of a local conflict, choosing instead to avoid the deleted topics altogether.

Kansas Citizens for Science (KCFS) offers our support to your district in counteracting the effects of these science standards and the Board majority's attempt to misleadingly minimize their consequences.

We can supply you with copies of the Fifth Working Draft, an annotated comparison of the August standards with the Fifth Working Draft, speakers to help explain the situation to your staff or community, and other resources. Please contact us at kcfs@kcfs.org, through our website at www.kcfs.org, or by mail at KCFS, P.O. Box 5981, Topeka, KS 66605-5981, if you would like additional information or assistance.

Recently USD 437, Auburn-Washburn, voted to return the state standards and to adopt the Fifth Working Draft instead. We have included a copy of the resolution passed by USD 437. In a letter to KCFS, USD 437 Board President Stephen Angel suggested that "each Board president place this issue on the agenda for discussion." If you would like to know more about USD 437's action, please contact either KCFS or Stephen Angel at zzange@washburn.edu.

Also included with this letter are a copy of the Board cover letter, a KCFS response to the science omitted from the standards, and a page of internet resources for further information. We encourage you to distribute copies of this packet to other interested persons, such as the rest of your local Board, administrators, science teachers, and Site Council members. We have included a copy of this packet for your superintendent.

We believe the Board's actions have been very detrimental to education in Kansas. We hope that the excellent Fifth Working Draft can soon be restored as Kansas's science standards.

Thank you very much for your time, and, we hope, your support in our efforts. Please let us know if there is anything we can do for you. Please visit our website at www.kcfs.org for further information about our organization and our efforts on behalf of responsible, quality science education in Kansas.

Sincerely,

Steve Lopes,
President
Kansas Citizens for Science